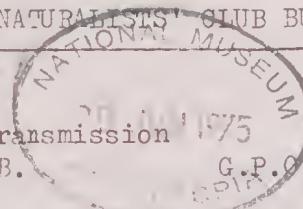


TASMANIAN FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB BULLETIN

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Club's Address -
G.P.O. Box 68 A, Hobart

NEXT MEETING will be held in the Royal Society Room, Tasmanian Museum on Thursday 19th June, at 7.45 p.m. The speaker will be Mr. H.A. Hutchinson from Bureau of Meteorology.

Subject: 'The Weather'

OUTING Saturday 21st June. In real weather looking around for some birds and flowers in the Coningham/Oyster Cove area. Transport in private cars from Prince Theatre at 10 a.m. (watch out for the 'othersiders' to come)

AUGUST MEETING - members' evening - Select your ten best slides! Think about your most liked subject (one out of the hundred)

- Beginners' talk - make it pointy.
- Experienced speakers - keep it short! -
- Everybody must have the opportunity.

(note: ten minutes maximum)

Some Publications tabled which can be borrowed from our library

'ECOS' - C.S.I.R.O. Environmental Research May 1975.

* Between 50 and 100 kg. of salt are deposited on every hectare of the Darling Ranges each year.

* *Dhytophtora cinnamomi* (fungus also in Tasmania) kills Yarrah at a rate estimated at 3600 ha. or more a year.

'Habitat' - A.C.F. bi-monthly magazine with unique photographs and articles.

'Australian Planta' - S.G.A.P. Last copy on Eucalypts for gardens, for sale at 50 c a copy.

'Victorian Naturalist'. Studies of *Antechinus Swansonii* (dusky mouse) and other small mammals.

'The Ring' - International Ornithological Bulletin 'Bird banding in Australia'.

'Notornis' - Ornithological Society of New Zealand 'Some Foods of the Wandering Albatross'

From other clubs

BLACKWOOD - *Acacia melanoxylon* R.Br. Fam. Leguminosae Sub.Fam. Mimosoideae

Blackwood, the largest and most important Acacia (Wattle) is found in the cool, moist, temperate regions of South-Eastern Australia and extends to sub-tropical parts of Southern Queensland. It is present in all states but Western Australia.

As a forest tree, it grows to a height of thirty metres and a diameter of one metre. The bark is grey to black in colour, hard, rough and deeply furrowed on older trees, often covered in epiphytes and lichen. When grown in the open, the branches begin well down in the trunk and tend to become pendulous, culminating in a rounded crown so very useful for shade and shelter. The bipinnate leaves appear in the juvenile stage and also after injury to the tree. They are soon replaced by adult foliage. These 'leaves' are not true in the strict botanical sense, but are formed by the flattening of the leaf-stalk. They have a leathery feel and are a pale green colour, having four prominent longitudinal veins. The creamy-white flowers, which bloom in the late winter to early spring, appear as fluffy balls, each ball being a group of axillary racemes in short peduncles.

One of the few, if only, superstitions of Australian origin is that it is bad luck to bring wattle flowers into the house; this would also include Blackwood. Compared with introduced flora, the pollen is very heavy and should cause no problem to hay-fever sufferers. The brown, narrow, curved seed-pods contain hard, black, shiny seeds which have to be softened before they will germinate. In nature, this is achieved by bush fires and can be accomplished in the nursery by pouring boiling water over the seeds. The success rate in growing Blackwoods is usually very high. Natural regeneration is very noticeable along creek-beds and river-flats throughout the state, and Blackwoods form an important part of the secondary forest regrowth.

Previously, Blackwoods were very numerous and of high quality



wherever high rainfall (around one metre) and good deep soils were present. They were quickly removed by farmers during the early settling of the land. Large numbers were felled, burned or used as fencing material (which gave excellent service). Commercial exploitation of the timber was at its height during the early years of this century. At one stage, Coogans made nothing but Blackwood furniture. The timber is one of the best known and prized of all Australian furniture timbers.

The name 'Blackwood' was given because of the colour of the wood, but it was also known as 'Lightwood' in the south of the state because the wood is white as first seen when cut with an axe. Apart from place-names 'Lightwood' is no longer used. When the timber is poor in quality, usually from young trees which grew too fast, it is known as 'Pencilwood' by sawmillers. The timber is of extremely variable colour; from a satinny, lustrous, light golden brown to a dark reddish-brown. Blackish-brown streaks make a delightful pattern and show the growth-rings. No two pieces of wood are alike. When light in colour and weight it is similar to Red Cedar, when darker like American Walnut, when deep red like Rosewood and when dark brown like Mahogany. Because of its excellent hand and machine working qualities it is used for quality furniture making. It carves, turns, steam-bends and polishes well. Selected flitches are used to make veneer for plywood and covering particle board. In former days it was used for barrel-making and for wooden wheels. (N.E. Naturalist)

WAR ON GIANT SNAILS IN U.S.A. - Giant African Snails, introduced into Florida in 1969 by a small boy who brought a pair from Hawaii and let them loose in granny's backyard, like rabbits multiplied madly, eating almost anything - trees, shrubs, flowers, vegetables, also house paint, - left nasty slimy trails etc. and gave off a very foul smell when dead. One hundred thousand have been exterminated by the United States Department of Agriculture, and now they feel they have got the better of the snails which grow to ten inches in length .. You'd need big boots for these! (N.E. Naturalist)

INDIAN RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARYDid you know?

Did you know that robins will eat snakes? I didn't until one evening last summer. I was outside in the driveway engaged in that unending task of trying to keep my car looking presentable. I happened to look up the driveway and noticed a robin which was engaged in a battle with what I thought was an extra large looking worm. My curiosity aroused, I ran into the house and got my binoculars and on closer inspection with these, the extra large worm turned out to be a small snake, possibly a baby DeKay or Garter snake. The robin after softening him up flew into a nearby tree and fed it to one of its young ones.
(Tom Coates, 'Orchid')

Could our robin beat this?

BELIEVE IT OR NOT (Nats' News)

A group of walkers visited the Cradle Area a week or so ago to see the Fagus - and their attention was drawn to a young lass from the mainland waiting to be attended to at the counter of the Pine Lodge Kiosk. She was dressed in a light frock and thongs and wanted to purchase supplies to take with her through the reserve! She was told that suitable provisions were not available and that she could not walk through the reserve dressed like that. Her reply "All right then - I'll catch the bus"!

ANCIENT ABORIGINAL CAVE

An interesting news item recently, and in keeping with our forthcoming Aboriginal week, was the announcement that an Aboriginal Cave Site on Hunter Island, off the North West Coast, has been estimated to be 13,500 years old. Artefacts have been found in the cave which has an opening some thirty metres across. The oldest previously known caves in Tasmania are those at Rocky Cape, whose estimated age is 8,000 years.

(North-Eastern Naturalist)

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